

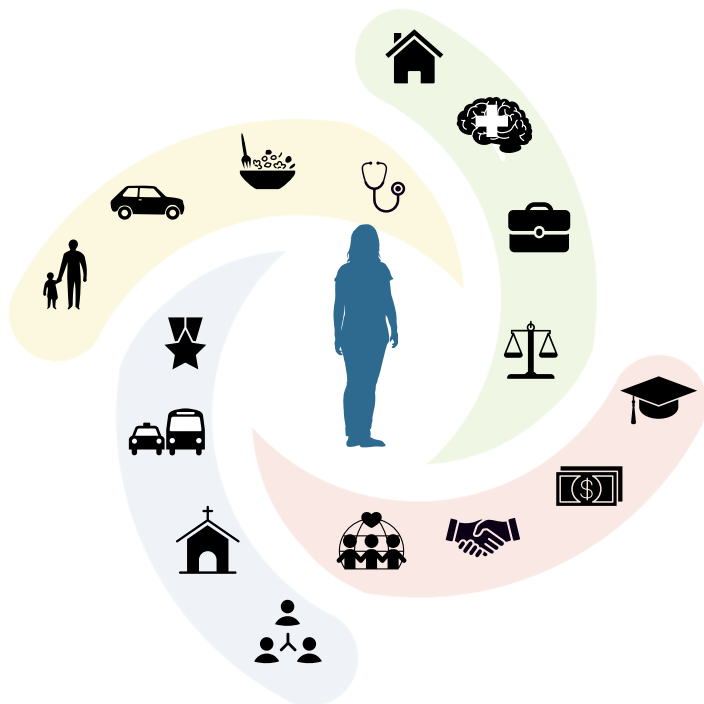
Understanding Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care

Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) is a holistic approach to substance use recovery that recognizes recovery as a comprehensive process encompassing all aspects of a person's life¹. As shown in the image below, ROSC places the individual at the center of their recovery experience. Rather than requiring individuals to navigate separate and disconnected parts of the recovery ecosystem—such as a probation officer, 12-step sponsor, and clinical care provider who may never interact—ROSC brings organizations, agencies, community members, and services together to support individuals at all stages of recovery. Through this collaborative approach, ROSC helps deliver resources and services that extend beyond treatment alone, becoming integrated into both an individual's personal life and broader community environment.

ROSC represents a shift away from traditional treatment models that have historically shaped substance use treatment. Traditional approaches can imply that successful treatment should result in the

complete resolution of substance use, and that the need for subsequent treatment reflects an individual's failure to maintain recovery rather than recognizing recovery as a difficult, nonlinear, and evolving process^{2,3}. This limitation is especially important because many individuals currently engaged in treatment have prior treatment experiences, reinforcing the understanding that recovery is iterative and that individual needs change over time. The ROSC model is designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the broader recovery population, including the estimated 45% of individuals in recovery who never formally engage in treatment services, as well as those who practice harm reduction strategies and may be overlooked in traditional one-size-fits-all approach to recovery^{2,4}.

In response, the recovery field has increasingly adopted ROSC as a framework to guide service providers and communities in developing more coordinated, flexible, and person-centered approaches to sustaining recovery¹.



Recovery can touch almost every aspect of our lives.

“A Recovery-Oriented System of Care (ROSC) means your community members and organizations work together to support people before, during, and after treatment.”

The ROSC model does not assume a single or a “correct” pathway to recovery. Instead, ROSC supports multiple recovery pathways, and that an individual’s recovery approach may evolve as they grow and their needs change. ROSC are made up of a coordinated network of healthcare organizations, community-based allied services, peer support systems, recovery community centers, prevention services, and other recovery support services⁵.

In practical terms, ROSC may look like an individual attending 12-step meetings or participating in a recovery community while also engaging in physical activity, mindfulness-based practices, or other supportive pathways. A ROSC approach may also involve individuals adapting their recovery strategies over time, such as transitioning between medication-assisted treatment, harm reduction strategies, peer support systems, and other recovery supports as their needs and circumstances evolve. Additionally because every community has distinct strengths, resources, and needs, no two ROSC models look exactly alike. The image on the previous page can help readers visualize how ROSC may take shape within their own communities.

ROSC is a framework rather than a single program, it brings together many evidence-based practices that are proven to support long-term recovery:^{2,3,4,5}

- Early identification and engagement improve outcomes
- Destigmatizing harm reduction that meets people where they are
- Providing opportunities to reintegrate individuals into their larger community
- Utilizing peer support and role models
- Increasing motivation
- Expanding educational opportunities
- Providing evidence-based treatments and interventions
- Creating opportunities for individuals to grow into valued roles
- Facilitating connections between individuals and the larger recovery community
- Providing recovery coaching
- Offering meaningful recovery support services such as recovery housing, employment support, and capacity-building opportunities
- Providing legal support and advocacy

ROSC empowers individuals in recovery by placing them at the center of their recovery journey and tailoring support services to their needs. Rather than relying on a single, fixed approach, ROSC are intentionally adaptable so that services can evolve alongside an individual’s recovery journey.

This flexibility is important in practice. Someone who has been in recovery for three months may need very different supports than someone who has sustained recovery for three years. Similarly, life circumstances can shift unexpectedly at any stage of recovery, creating periods where additional support is needed. ROSC’s holistic framework allows individuals to adjust their recovery approach while remaining connected to meaningful support systems and community resources³.

Establishing a Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care system begins with shifting recovery culture away from a focus on individual weaknesses or shortcomings and toward a person-first, strengths-based approach. By fostering an empowering and accepting recovery culture, individuals are better positioned to take responsibility, grow within their recovery journeys, and prioritizing recovery without fear of stigma or judgment from their communities. Individuals should be placed at the center of their recovery experience and empowered to participate in decision-making about the supports, services, and pathways that best align with their needs. To fully establish a ROSC, collaborative and productive relationships must also be built among organizations, service providers, recovery allies, and other community partners. Without these relationships, recovery remains a siloed and fragmented experience rather than the interwoven community of support that ROSC is designed to offer. Because each ROSC is shaped by local needs, assets, and service landscapes, the relationships that make a ROSC possible will vary from community to community.

Key Takeaway: Recovery is an ongoing process, rather than a single life stage. The ROSC model is able to best support recoveree because it provides flexible, long-term support that adapts to people’s changing needs and local community conditions.

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